INTERVIEW WITH DR. F. EUGENE HESTER
BY MARK MADISON DECEMBER, 10, 2002

MADISON: Hi, I'm Mark Madison. Today is December 10, 2002. We are in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. We are doing an oral history interview with Dr. F. Eugene Hester who is going to tell us about is very interesting career with the Fish and Wildlife Service. Gene thanks so much for being with us this morning!

DR. HESTER: Glad to be here.

MADISON: Let me start with one of the most interesting aspects of your career; and that is that you are one of the few FWS employees to be trained in Fisheries and Wildlife Management. How did that come about?

DR. HESTER: It came about through naiveté. When I started out, I got a BS and Master's degree, mostly emphasizing birds and mammals, and very little about fish. I decided that to be a Fish and Wildlife biologist, I needed the other half so I went specifically to Auburn University to study fisheries. Soon after that people began to ask me, 'what will you be when you finish? Will you be a wildlife biologist or a fisheries biologist?' I didn't know what they were talking about because I thought you were supposed to be both. So it was by naiveté. But on the other hand it turned out to be an advantage for most of my career.

MADISON: When did you come to work for the Fish and Wildlife Service?

DR. HESTER: I actually started in the summer, while I was a graduate student at NC State University. I was working on Chassahowitzka Refuge in Florida. It was just a summer job. Then later, I came to work as a Cooperative Fisheries Unit Leader at NC State University. That was in 1963. I was there as Unit Leader for eight years. Then I was encouraged to come to Washington as Chief of Fishery Research. I didn't want to come to Washington, like most FWS employees, but it was a meaningful job and an important opportunity was laid before me. It was an opportunity to come in and do what I felt were some important things. I frankly felt that it was time to come if I was ever coming to Washington, so I did. Two years later, when the position came open for the Assistant of Associate Director for all of Research, fish and wildlife research, this background of fish and wildlife biology was I think an advantage. So I was moved up to the next position and held it for several years.

MADISON: What that in about 1965 that you became the Associate?

DR. HESTER: No that was in 1972. I was the Cooperative Unit Leader for eight years.

MADISON: I see.

DR. HESTER: And then in 1971 I came to Washington as Chief of Fishery Research. Then, in 1973 I became the Associate Director for all research. Then, I later had some additional responsibilities added.

MADISON: What did our research program look like when you took it over in 1973?

DR. HESTER: It was largely centered around research centers and the capability of those centers to work on specific kinds of problems. They did exceedingly well for certain kinds of things, but I think there were major gaps of things that were not consistent with the individual research centers. That was one of the big problems. How to match up the needs of the agency in a broad sense with the capability of specific centers? Some things they did exceedingly well. In some things there were big gaps between those.

MADISON: Give me an example of a gap.

DR. HESTER: More broad, ecological kinds of things. For example in the days back then we had a Fish Genetics Lab, a Fish Nutrition Lab, etc. So some of the more ecological kinds of things didn't fit those organizations very well. There have been a lot of changes over time, and I don't want to be too critical, but there was an important responsibility to try to match up the needs of the agency in a broad sense and the needs of the nation, in a broad sense, with the capability of some of the more specific capabilities that we had.

MADISON: What were some of the changing needs of the nation in the 1970s? It was an interesting time.

DR. HESTER: Well it was. One of the big issues when I first came was what to do about the Atlantic salmon. There were all kinds of questions about whether they were being over fished, or whether they were being over fished here, or whether the rivers were deteriorating in terms of quality; hatchery needs, state responsibilities versus federal responsibilities, and international responsibilities versus our responsibilities and those kinds of things. There were a lot of issues like that. Of course, there are always some about migratory birds and endangered species was beginning to be an important issue along about that time.

MADISON: Migratory birds are something that you wrote a book about. *The World of the Wood Duck*.

DR. HESTER: That's correct.

MADISON: How did you become interested in Wood Ducks?

DR. HESTER: Actually I started that as an undergraduate project at NC State University. I was taking an Ornithology class and each student had to select a species and so some studies about it and write a report. I selected the Wood Duck mainly because they were roosting on my father's farm pond. My father and I would go down in the afternoon and count the birds coming to roost in the autumn. Then, I learned that Wood Ducks nest in trees, which was a revelation for me. I knew about ducks and geese and swans nesting in potholes and so forth, but not in trees. So once I found out about that, I began to study about the nest boxes and even put up some in hollow logs and so forth for Wood Ducks to use. They did use them and then I carried this study further for my Master's degree. I was studying the nesting, migration, and biology of Wood Ducks in eastern central North Carolina. Then later, when I was back there on the faculty, I had students work on some of these projects as well.

MADISON: That's fascinating. Lets go back to the Endangered Species Act. That had occurred right when you were taking over as Research Chief. How did that affect research in the Service?

DR. HESTER: It called for a good bit more knowledge about some species. And the effort was not just what the FWS knew about these, but what does the nation know about them, where are our knowledge gaps and what can be done about it? There was always efforts to move ahead and make decisions, sometimes with very little knowledge. That has been and always will be the case. But it did shape some of the kinds of research that we did. And some of the things that were initially researched became production-oriented kinds of things. For example, Eagle production out at Patuxent. In the early days it was a study of whether or not you could move eggs and get the birds to re-nest and have eggs to transplant somewhere else where they were not successful. Then, later it became a production facility. So when does it end being research and become operational? How do you budget for those kinds of changes? Those were the kinds of things that we dealt with.

MADISON: That's an interesting point in that, how long were you the head of Research?

DR. HESTER: I was head of Research, and part of that time I also had some ecological responsibilities until 1981.

MADISON: So you were there at the height of some controversies about production and captive breeding and so on. How did you resolve some of those issues?

DR. HESTER: Those problems lasted beyond then! There were a lot of species that fall into that category. To the extent that they could be resolved, it had to be transfer money from one part of the organization to another, or, have the second part of the organization budget for it and take it over. There was always a need for the research that started: you

just don't end it. There were other kinds of research needs so there was always a little tug of war as to whether the money should go back into research in other ways, or whether it should become operational. If it becomes operational; what is there to backfill behind the research so that the research doesn't just continually loose out, as things become production oriented.

MADISON: What is the connection between research and production? Is there also a research element to producing large numbers of a certain species like Eagles and things?

DR. HESTER: Absolutely! And fish! The Service is well known for its research on fish nutrition and fish genetics, fish physiology, fish diseases; and the interaction between the environment and the disease and health of the fish is the same in birds and mammals. So there is a great need to understand what factors precipitate these kinds of problems and how to avoid and overcome them and so forth. It doesn't go away. There are new diseases and as animals get more crowded, the problems come anew in other ways.

MADISON: Let me ask you another question about science in the Service. We've been thinking a lot about scientific integrity in the FWS. I wonder in the years when you were head of Research, what was our scientific reputation with the outside world? With academic institutions or other agencies?

DR. HESTER: It was good. I think it probably into question when people began to use the science information in a regulatory sense, which has of course always been there to some extent. But there are some things like the Endangered Species Act and others that brought this to the forefront. What is the best science, and who has the best science and does the FWS have the best science? Other people were contending that they had good scientists, 'why isn't the information being brought to the forefront?' Frankly, there is no easy way to judge who's got the best science. But all of that comes into play.

MADISON: How do you decide? You've got different scientists work. Did you try to bring them together and combine the science, or did you just have to pick and chose?

DR. HESTER: Most of that was not in research per say, but the Endangered Species Act which had to balance what we knew inside the Service and what other people knew. For example; the Smithsonian, or the state Fish and Game Agents, or anybody. Universities for example, had knowledge about species; distribution, abundance, causes of decline and all of these kinds of things. It had to be weighed more by the endangered species people in weighing all of these factors coming from various directions than it did just in research per say.

MADISON: Where did you go after 1981?

DR. HESTER: I was made Deputy Director. At that time, in one day, the Director and Deputy Director of the Service were dismissed. Lynn Greenwalt was the Director at the time. He came to my office and said, "I'll be gone by the end of the day, and you're it! You have the responsibility to carry the organization until a new Director is named." Again, in my naïveté I thought it would take about a month or so to get a new Director named. In actuality, it took ten months. Two people came to town to be Director.

MADISON: Who were they?

DR. HESTER: One was named by the White House and one was named by the Secretary of the Interior. They both came to be prepared to be Director. One of my responsibilities was to get each of them prepared to be Director. That was an interesting behind the scenes challenge because at the time, I had a responsibility to maintain an organization that was somewhat in despair because of the loss of the Director and Deputy Director. There was a major change in the direction of the department. There was a lot of uncertainty about what programs would continue. There was a lot of uncertainty about the budget, because the budget was being rewritten, even after it had been sent to Congress. So there were multiple kinds of problems, including morale in the organization, which I considered to be very important. And preparing these people to be Director and being in the midst of a struggle as to who would be Director. The two were Norm Roberts who came from California, Ronald Reagan, the President wanted him seriously considered for the position; and Bob Jansen who was previously Director of Fish and Game out in Arizona. He had been the choice of the Department. Over time, in part because of the law, which says that, the Director by virtue of education and experience be knowledgeable about the principals of fish and wildlife management. Jansen, as a Wildlife Biologist, clearly had those and Norm Roberts was kind of being put to the test. But it was never formally put to the test. It was challenged in an informal way and over time his name was withdrawn. So the process took ten months. It was an interesting and challenging time. And one in which, as I look back on it, while it was a difficult in some ways, it was an important thing to be done. I was glad to have the opportunity to help shape it.

MADISON: One of the interesting things about your career is that in ways you have acted as a liaison between political appointments and career Service folks. How has that worked?

DR. HESTER: I suspect that has been my most challenging and important responsibility. I think partly that comes about by being a career person throughout. I am a great believer in what the FWS is all about and coming up through the ranks. And yet, understanding that it must mesh with a political system. I sometimes compare it to a fresh-water stream, like the Shenandoah or the Potomac that flows down and comes in contact with the Ocean. Somewhere, they have to meet. And even in a place like Hawaii maybe, where it comes straight off of a cliff and falls in the Ocean, it still meets, and there is still

some mixing point. At most places it's an estuary. And in that estuary you get both kinds of forces coming together. They must exist in some form. So that interface is essential. Whether you want it to happen or not, it's going to happen! The answer, I think, is to try and figure out how to best mesh those two things.

Part of it is being a translator. There is so much misunderstanding between those two systems. They operate in such a different way, and they have different ulterior or basic ways of looking at things. It's not easy for people in a political system to understand what the career folks are concerned about and vice versa. Often times they both have very valid considerations. To the extent that those can be meshed, or can be interpreted is an important part for whoever has that kind of responsibility.

MADISON: You worked under a number of different FWS Directors. How did their leadership styles differ?

DR. HESTER: They varied a great deal. Some were much more decentralized organizational leaders than others. And you find this in nearly any kind of organization. You have top/down management or bottom/up management or horizontal management. The question is to what degree to people at various levels have the opportunity to chart their course and carry out a broad, general kind of mandate as opposed to a very specific mandate. One of the things we went through was the Program Management system, in which, I think, there was a very legitimate need to look at the bigger picture. We had Refuges doing its thing, Research doing its thing, Management doing its thing, etc. So the question was, 'is somebody looking at that the needs of migratory birds, for example are?' So we need more management on refuges? Do we need more birds banded? Do we need more research studies? How do all of these things mesh together? That's basically what the Program Management system was supposed to be. It was supposed to look at the bigger picture and make allocations as to which of these things need attention at this time. It was foreign to many people in the organization and it had its difficulties, and assets as most any program change brings about. There were things that that happened. Different administrations see those things in a somewhat different light.

MADISON: Probably one of the biggest changes in administration was from Carter to Reagan, especially in the Interior Department. What was it like working with James Watt?

DR. HESTER: James Watt was probably one of the more knowledgeable people to be Secretary of the Interior because he had been in Interior before. He knew the responsibilities of the department. He knew the way it functioned. He knew a lot about the political system, and he hit the ground running, so to speak. So whether you agreed with what he was trying to accomplish; he was probably more effective at accomplishing some of those things than some other people had been. This was because of the learning curve and the complexities of the department, which is really a very complex

organization. It has conservation functions, development functions, Indian Trust responsibilities and other things. There is a mish-mash of about ten different bureaus, each with somewhat different responsibilities and different mandates. They were funded by Congress in different ways, and so forth, also. And they are funded by bureau, not by the Department of the Interior largely. Administering a complex program like that is challenging every time any Secretary comes in. But as I say, I think James Watt came prepared to take it on with a lot of mandate, he felt, from the President and from the public. He hit the ground running so it was viewed with suspicion by a lot of employees, which increased the amount of challenge. Some of it became out of proportion I think. For example; one of the more controversial things I got caught up in was development on Refuges. We had a list of fourteen things that happened on refuges of a commercial nature. Cutting trees, was an example. The question became, 'why don't we look at that on all of the refuges, and do it where it is appropriate on any of the refuges?' Obviously that's a more development kind of approach. This changes from administration to administration. Some are more concerned about preservation, and some are more concerned about development. But that's the way the nation flows. So I put out a memo to all of the Regions and Refuges telling them to look at these fourteen things, 'we should implement them where appropriate.' That memo was not regarded lightly by the press. We had one newspaper in New York picked it up and called out the three Refuge Managers and said, "What do you think of Hester's memo?" As often times happens in these things, they will pump them to get an answer that you can use in a quotation. The questions would be, 'aren't you concerned about this?' or 'wouldn't it be a problem?' or what ever. Then you get a reaction, 'well, this could be a problem' and that kind of thing. That was one newspaper article, then it got picked up on the wire and in state after state editors and newspaper reports began to call out the Refuge Managers and ask them what they thought about this memo. "Doesn't this give you concern? Isn't this a bad move for the Refuge System?" and so forth. Fortunately for me, not everybody read that. And one Refuge Manager said, "Keep your shirt on, you're reading something into it that's not there!" But it's the kind of things that gets a life of it's own. And the more controversial the subject or Secretary of the Interior, the more likely it is to cause these kinds of concerns, some of which are real and some of which are the result of uncertainty. That's part of an organization and the psychology of an organization. Just as when people have periods when they go through uncertainty or don't want to make changes and so forty, organizations do this too. As a matter of fact, the more I studied it, the more I felt like an organization such as the FWS or some of the other parts of Interior were a lot like a person. You take your neighbors; if you look at the way your family operates including financially and other relationships and go to the next-door neighbor, they don't operate the same way. It operates, but it's not the same way. So bureau-to-bureau it that way and administration to administration is that way. It doesn't mean that one of them is necessarily all wrong it's just that it's different. Some of those changes are harder to administer than others and some of them come about more easily. It's inherent in the process; it's going to change.

MADISON: Did anything come of the memo? Was there more developmental activities on the refuges that occurred?

DR. HESTER: There was some. Frankly, some of the things, I think in a more reasoned way, people would generally conclude that they probably needed to happen. But it was a time of great suspicion and people were reading things into it way beyond what I think should have been. But that's also part of the challenge. How do you make change and have people understand and be supportive of the change? So that gets back to the thing we were taking about earlier.

MADISON: What did Secretary Watt think of the Endangered Species Act? That was one of his mandates.

DR. HESTER: His comment to me was, "The Endangered Species Act and the Clean Water Act, the administration of them and the participation by them in this department have brought this nation to it's knees." There was a time in which we were viewed in great suspicion as we were trying to hold back the development of the nation. During that time, fortunately for me, there was a newspaper article, which came out and described the dilemma better than I could have described it. There was the town of Appleton, Wisconsin in which a development was ready to occur just outside of town. It was a big shopping mall. The people in town were concerned about that. They were hesitant about it because they felt it would have such an economic impact on downtown. At a town council kind of meeting they were lamenting their fate, and the fact that they couldn't control it. It was outside of town. They didn't own the land. There was already an option on the land, as I recall. It was kind of doomed. But one of the people there made a suggestion; "We'll go out there and turn over stones and see if we can find us an endangered species! And we'll use the Endangered Species Act to halt this thing!" It was also suggested that if this didn't work, they could use the Clean Water Act to preserve the creek that kids jumped over which was out there, and stop this development. I clipped out the article and sent it up to the Assistant Secretary and to the Secretary. We had Monday meetings to go over objectives that the department had and for people such as myself to tell about their progress. I might add in a parenthetical way that the Secretary brought a staff and they were all ready to pound on you about things. After having had that happen to me two or three times, I learned that the only way to manage that was to tell the Secretary two or three things at the very beginning that would get his attention. Then we could have a dialogue, as opposed to turning this pack of people loose on me! I commented about it, and asked if he had read the newspaper article. He was not aware of it. Ray Arnett who was Assistant Secretary said, "Mr. Secretary, I have it and it's on its way to you, but you don't have it yet." Fortunately, I had copies of it. I had underlined the key phrases in red. I handed it to him and read that. The interesting thing was that that day, his attitude turned around. Instead of being down on us for these things; he would ask people, "Why did you ask that question? Are you really concerned about that species or are you trying to use the Endangered Species Act

for some ulterior purpose?" I had said many times over that there are interest groups that us and our authorities for their own purposes that were not envisioned by the Act. But it didn't mean anything until that newspaper article came out. Then, it became very clear as to how people would, and could look at these Acts. The attitude changed. It didn't go away, but it certainly changed to where it was more balanced. What's really behind this? How good is the information? And why is anybody raising these questions?

MADISON: So he was willing to listen? If you made the case that this species is….

DR. HESTER: Twice, I was able to make the case that said it's not quite the way it appears to be. Fortunately for me, I was able to be convincing both times that we needed some course direction change.

MADISON: Let's talk a little about another agency in Interior that you were involved in. That was the creation of the National Biological Survey. What drove the initial idea to create the NBS?

DR. HESTER: When Secretary Babbitt came to be Secretary of the Interior; he had a very fundamental idea that the science should be separated from regulation. I think it a very worthwhile idea, that when you have a scientist basically making policy or enforcing regulation or developing regulations you are blending two things that don't blend very well. You are causing more questions about the background and reason for these things than it is ever, in my view, legitimate. So to have a scientist to say, 'here are the facts,' and to have somebody else to make the decisions what to do about them is a valid way to go. He was trying to basically back up, and say, 'we should separate these'. There were several things working against that. First off, I think he had developed a reputation for being such a preservationist that there was suspicion about what all of this was coming about to mean. Secondly the term, 'national biological survey' had its roots more than a hundred years ago, in which there was an organization very much along the lines that I described. People went out west and described what species were there and when they migrated, how many eggs they laid and what they fed on and those kinds of things. It was very basic information but without any kind of management responsibility. So he was trying to recreate that kind of thing. The FWS was derived from the Bureau of Biological Survey. And the Bureau of Fisheries was part of our heritage and our reason for being, and what we were doing long before we had management responsibilities. But it was viewed; the term National Biological Survey, in the meantime had begun to take on a totally different concept. Because people viewed it as coming out and surveying the land and determining what's there. That would in most people's view, would lead to some determination of what should be done about it. It was not in isolation as research per say, or surveys per say, but surveys that would almost inherently bring about regulations and management decisions. People were uptight that it would not be viewed in isolation. It would be viewed as part of a land management approach, or something like that. It did not get a very good welcome on The Hill, and in other places. It caused a lot of

confusion. Especially because inherent in this was removing the scientific capability from several bureaus of the Department of the Interior and putting them into a new bureau. Most bureaus did not want to loose their research and survey capability and have it moved more remotely from them. There was a big question of whether their own needs be met. In a case like that there is the question, 'will our needs be met?' versus some broader needs of the Secretary or the nation. 'Will we be left', "we" being the FWS, or the Park Service or whatever, 'with important needs that don't get met because somebody is addressing more important, or more national needs.' So there's always that kind of inherent issue there. The political issue of what's behind all this, or what will the results be on a more national scale as it relates to the Endangered Species Act and things like that. It became apparent that "survey" was a word that was touching off a lot of people. The name was changed to National Biological Service, which might have eased it a little bit, but was still on a track that said there was a lot of suspicion here, what is this all about. Eventually, several changes were made in the department and the organization became part of the USGS and is now a branch in USGS-the Biological Recourses Division.

MADISON: You were tasked with helping create the initial entity….

DR. HESTER: I was actually in the Park Service at that time. For the first six months or so, I was Associate Director for Natural Resources in the Park Service. We were one of the contributing agencies giving people and other resources to the new organization, which was taking shape. For about six months, I was in there determining which positions would go to the new organizations and which ones would stay with the Park Service. Perhaps it was more difficult there, than in some organizations because the Park Service did not have a separate research organization so clearly defined. Many people who were carrying out scientific work had a management, or what we called a resource management responsibility; to be kind of the interpreter for the Park Superintendent and for the public and so forth. So it was a gradual process of doing the studies and interpreting them and helping to get them implemented by management. Drawing this sharp line of who goes and who stays was somewhat difficult in the Park Service. But we were making those decisions. In some cases we had to take two positions that were very similar and declare one of them to be more research and the other to be more management and divide it up that way. So one person went, and one person stayed, and so forth. But as I say, for about six months, I was in the Park Service doing that. Then, it became pretty apparent that we were having a lot of difficulty and as Secretary Babbitt said, much of the difficult was within the department; resistance within the department. He and George Frampton ask me to get it organized, and to get it going while a search for a Director to come in was going on. The Secretary was very much involved in getting recommendations from the National Science Foundation and the National Academy of Science and organizations like that, and other places. He put out a broad search. There were a lot of issues and a lot of problems in addition to the political ones I talked about of how Congress what reacting to all of this. There was the issue of transferring people from seven different bureaus. There were somewhat different pay systems and all of that kind of thing, in to a new

organization, and how to make that happen. A lot of people kind of giggle when I say that one of the problems I faced was how to get all of these people paid the first payroll that it became functional. I had moved from the FWS to the Park Service for example. First it was on detail, and then it became permanent. Frankly, my records didn't transfer with me. I had to go back and recreate even such things as the withholding for bonds, and combined federal campaigns and stuff like that; the things you do on day one. I had to go back and recreate all of those things! So to take all of these people, transferring from seven different bureaus and to assure that they were going to paid on time and correctly was of some concern to me. They way we did that was to have a dry run two weeks in advance in which the checks didn't go anywhere. Basically, dummy checks were made and all of the confirmations were made and the bugs worked out of it. So when we did pull the lever, it did work right. There were a lot of things inherent in an organization, behind the scenes like that, and not all of these big policy changes, but a lot of the things it takes to make an organization work.

MADISON: It would seem that another challenge that would have occurred would be creating some type of institutional identity for this new agency. How did you go about doing that?

DR. HESTER: Well, it's one of those things that it hard to create. It evolves. For a long time I had heard about the culture of an organization. Having grown up in the FWS I found the term kind of foreign. I didn't know what people were talking about. When I went to the Park Service as Associate Director for Natural Recourses in a lot of ways, it was the most simple of transitions. I was over there to head up research and natural resource management and to be involved in things like endangered species populations and what affects them and water and air quality and all of those kinds of things. It was a very natural kind of transition. But yet, the two organizations were so different in the way they were formed and the way the functioned and in the way they budget, and the way they look at issues. This is not to say one was right, and one was wrong, but they were different. Again, it's back to the comparison of the two families living next to each other. They do things in a different way. One may save money for a child's education from day one. The other may not be concerned about until they are ready to go to college. There are a whole lot of other things that are different. The two organizations were quite different. It was an interesting challenge to fit in there and to be effective in that position. Which I will simply say that it came down to a question of ability to work together, accomplish mutual goals and to understand those goal and work together to make them happen. I was pleased with what we were able to do. Again, as we bring together people from seven different bureaus into a new entity, not just in to one, but a new entity, there was a lot of effort to build espirit du corps, to try to insure scientific integrity, to try to be sure that the needs of the seven bureaus weren't left behind. This became especially difficult when the budget got diminished because there was the question; do you cut each of them proportionately or do you have some overall objective which states that some of those things were less important than others. As you might imagine, if a bureau Director

is not getting his or her fair share out of this thing, that causes some additional consternation. There was some difficulty too in whether the new identity will be separate from the mix of the ones that came in to it. Are they all going to be more like the FWS, or the Park Service for example, which were the two big ones in this, and have other organizations just kind of drop out. Or, will it really truly be a mix of all of those things. It was some of all of that. Then there was a lot of effort too, to be sure that the needs of the agencies were met. How do you prioritize the needs of the agencies and then match them up with the capability of this new organization. As long as the budget was expanding, or was proposed to be expanding, it was relatively easy because you could do both. But when the budget gets diminished, then, the hard part comes. Which of these things takes precedence. And we had to deal with all of this.

MADISON: It was a short-lived entity. Did it develop any kind of identity before it was folded in to the USGS?

DR. HESTER: There were difficulties again, in the sense of the political process of how Congress looked at it and even where the Regional offices would be became very important to try to wrestle with. For example, the initial budget didn't identify where the Regional offices would be, but as the budget took shape we were told that we had to identify where they were going to be. This was just before I had become part of it; they had identified places where we had existing organizational structures. You know, there's going to be somebody there to do something. That took on a life of it's own. What I've often referred to is that is a Senator or a Congressman's dream come true. You name something in my district and put it there without my having to twist your arm or anything. So once put on that piece of paper, it began to have a life of it's own. Whether that was the right place or not, it began to have a life of it's own. There were a lot struggles about even where a Regional office should be, whether we took over existing structures, and a lot of the people were interested in it for all kinds of reasons as to why it should be where they wanted it to be. A lot of those kinds of things become involved in it as well instead of just looking at it as just the needs of research and how to best do the research. Even there, I am bringing together seven different bureaus and the way they were structured and budgeted was an important challenge. In some bureaus, the money was allocated out for the salaries and then separate money was allocated for the research. In some cases it was all put together. In some cases the salaries were about ninety percent of the whole budget. In other cases, it was a small part. To try to bring some uniformity to that you can immediately begin to understand the problem. If the guy who only had ten percent to work with, doesn't get that ten percent he has nothing to work with. The guy who as a lot of money to work under contract or whatever, is likely going to suffer because the sponge will be moved in a direction that says they've got a surplus. It's not necessarily a surplus. In fact, an interesting dilemma that comes about in a case like that is that in general you are better off to have a large amount of money not tied up in salaries, and benefits and the operating costs of a building because that limits your flexibility to change with the changing times. If you have money that you can use in a

flexible way for temporary appointments, or contracts or cooperative agreements and so forth, you can change directions. You can go where the need is. But that has become very vulnerable in a case like this. So were some of the management challenges as well.

MADISON: Did it function for a brief period as you had hoped as separating management from research?

DR. HESTER: Yes it did, but largely as a result of the momentum that was already there. The researchers basically had the capability to continue to do the things they were doing, and to some extent, to adapt to changing times. There was important needs identification by the various bureaus and a very serious effort to try to get the new organization to address those problems. It did function to carry those things out. But as I say, the over all philosophy was that Congress had such skepticism about it as to what it was really intending to do; and not just Congress. The public had a lot of resistance. I had one group come to town to see us and they listened to my comments about what it was to be and how it was to function for about thirty or forty-five minutes; then I remember one of the people said, "I heard you, and I believe you, but I don't want you on my land because you're going to find something on there that's going to complicate my life!" That was the overall philosophy on it from the public, and by Congress. That was an important resistance to it.

MADISON: How does it look in retrospect?

DR. HESTER: It was an important thing to be done. But perhaps it was the wrong time for it to be done, and the wrong atmosphere for it to be done. In a more neutral game, there is a lot of value to it. But was in such a turmoil, in such a difficult time, and with so many political factions pulling in different directions, each trying to be in control and seeing this with such skepticism it was very difficult to sell at that particular time. As I say, maybe twenty-five or fifty years earlier it could have gone, but with things like the Endangered Species Act and some of the other things that were viewed as problems to progress, it was viewed as bad news by a lot of people. It was just very difficult to sell, regardless of the basic merits that it might have had.

MADISON: Has loosing the research function affected the Park Service or the FWS, having worked in both?

DR. HESTER: I think both organizations feel that if they had the people in their own organizations they have more direct contact and more ability to influence decisions about what kinds of research gets done and so forth. That's inherent. In any organization, you'd rather have the people working for you than to have to go across town, or across country to try to work with people you don't know. You don't want to have to deal with a separate organization and so forth to get them to do the kinds of things you want done. So some of it's just inherent in any organizational structure. Those issues don't go

away. It addresses some broader needs. The question is always the nations needs, versus the Secretary's needs, versus the Bureau's needs, versus the individual unit needs like a Park or a Refuge, or whatever. The way it's organized influences which of those things you address. It can't address them all. In fact, I remember one Refuge Manager who came to me with a specific problem that he had. I used to talk about it in department staff meetings. It became almost a little humorous kind of thing. But it was a very real need for that Refuge Manager. From the department standpoint, not talking about the Secretary, but the general bureau directors, it was sort of a minor thing out there. Why are we worried about that? And I was worried about it because it was a very real need by a Refuge Manager. The challenge becomes how do you structure it so that there is a way to address these various needs, and it doesn't all go to address some national need, for example. But you solve other people's problems with more information too.

MADISON: That's a good point. Let me ask you one final question. You worked for the FWS for a long time; what were some of the major changes you saw within that organization?

DR. HESTER: The Program Management System that I mentioned; both having it be created and then later dismantled and recreated in some other form and so forth. This was one of the ways in which there is always the question of who makes those kinds of decisions and at what level. If you work for say fish hatcheries or for refuges, you'd like to make those decisions yourself. And if the decision is being made two or three levels above, there is always the question of whether you are properly viewed, is something else taking precedence that you might see as a lower priority, but getting the attention. There is always this question of who is making the decisions and at what level, and on what basis of information is the decision being made.

Then, there is also the question of the functions. Of course in a program management system you look at more broad functions as opposed to more site-specific functions. It depends to some extent on where you are in the organization how you look at those things. A person can be doing a very good job at an individual site, but there may be a very valid question as to whether that is the highest priority in the nation. Maybe it needs to be done at some other site. So there are always those kinds of things.

There are always organizational changes. Some programs of course are new and growing and different that they were back in 1970 or 1971. The Endangered Species Act is probably a big one because of the way it continues to influence not only what happens about species but also what happens about people and their lands and development and how you can have both, and those kinds of things.

MADISON: Gene, thank you very much for your time. We really appreciate you doing this oral history interview.

DR. HESTER: I have enjoyed being with you, thank you.